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ABSTRACT

This document presents a plan which would integrate theoretical considerations of sport and movement activities with actual student experience in movement. Emphasis is placed on the experience of self in movement, the experience of self in relation to others, learning about others in movement, and understanding movement itself. Activities used to implement the plan are suggested. (MJM)

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"The Other Physical Education"

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The gym and fields are gone! What should I do now? Who knows, maybe this is a blessing in disguise? I now have an opportunity to attempt something new and stimulating. It is exciting when I view it from this perspecitve for I have an opportunity to provide the students with a new experience in Physical Education. For those students who previously enjoyed Physical Education, it will mean a new dimension. For other students who were "turned off" by the conventional modes of Physical Education, it will mean a second chance.

During the four years that I have been teaching, I have talked with many students. I find that what they most dislike about their education is the artificial role they are expected to play. In the classroom, they complain, they are regarded as mental containers for vast rivers of knowledge. As a result, their physical and emotional needs are often neglected. Physical Educators have also traditionally perpetuated this schism, by emphasizing only the physical body. Certainly, this is an artificial circumstance for we are all whole beings, not only with physical capacities, but also mental and emotional abilities. Therefore, the program I develop must do more than just develop physical sport skills, with an occasional nod toward the psychological and social development that supposedly occurs.

Now I have an opportunity to integrate the theoretical considerations of sport and movement activities with the students actual experience in movement. I will encourage the students to become aware of their total experience, not just its physical aspects; this should open up promising new dimensions to their experiences.

There are many alternatives to meet the needs of this unique situation. I will present two approaches that convey the theoretical domain of Physical Education. The first, I can use the classroom approach to transmit the biological, psychological, sociological, philosophical, and bio-mechanical facts and theories that constitute our body of knowledge about movement activity. This is the Academic Discipline approach to Physical Education. But, problems that I find with this technique is that it places the cart before the horse; too often we set up the established facts and theories of other disciplines, then harness the movement activity to it. For example, sociologists have developed theories of group structures which have subsequently been applied by Sport Sociologists to sport. This is one way of learning about movement activity. And by doing this, we risk neglecting the essence of our own unique field of study since we set out to learn other disciplines in order to apply them to the movement activity. The

second alternative, and I believe it is the more feasible one, would be to allow the knowledge to develop naturally out of our direct movement experience, rather than the other way around. The structure of the curriculum I propose is based on the second method, the student's own experience in movement.

Our students are literally "walking bodies of knowledge". I see my task as "turning them on" to the knowledge they have gained from their direct movement experience. They have had years of experience in movement activities; playing freely as a child, experiencing the joys and pressures of adult organized programs, informal recreation, intramurals, formal athletics and a multitude of additional movement encounters. The basic assumption of this position is discussed by FRALEIGH:

> "...man can and does learn himself... which is to be clearly distinguished from learning about himself. This means that as man moves he is in some ways potentially available to himself for his own self-understanding. Such direct awareness of selfhood is, at the time of direct experience, non-verbal and possesses its own validity as a way of knowing". 1

All students are potential authorities on movement experiences. And I will attempt to capitalize on this asset in order to help them grasp an understanding of themselves as moving beings.

The theoretical content of my program will become; one's own experiences in movement. We will take off from these experiences by asking questions such as:

What is happening to me when I move? How does fear affect my long-horse vaulting? This type of questioning may encourage a student to reflect upon his or her own experiences. If the student feels pain, he may ask: How does pain affect my performance? What does pain feel like? Is the pain limited to only one area of my body or does it spread out through my total body? What physical sensations do I associate with pain? Do males and females react to pain in similar ways? For sharing their experiences, the class will be organized into discussion groups to allow dialogue. Students will share ideas and personal knowledge about their own experiences with pain, or whatever the issue may be. These discussions will relate and integrate the knowledge gained from doing movement activity with knowledge gained from verbalizing about movement in the discussion groups. My assumption is that by exchanging ideas and questioning each other, the students will come to a deeper understanding of their movement experience as well as those of others.

Discussion of movement may be complemented by using the body of formal research in physical education. I could also offer them selected lectures that address the issues that arise from their experiences. They could then compare their experience with that in the research papers! They will also be encouraged to do their own research, conduct interviews, do projects in the area or employ

whatever approach is most appropriate. Thus as Fraleigh states; "Briefly, the intent is to relate doing movement and verbalizing about movement into an understanding of movement". 2

In order to achieve this objective I will focus on four aspects of the movement experience. First, the experience of self in movement activity ' How do I feel when my performance is perfect? Second, the experience of self in relation to others in movement. How do others watching me effect my movement? Third, learning about others in movement. "Why does Bill constantly argue when he plays?" Fourth, an understanding of the movement itself. What is it about kicking balls that I enjoy so much? These four areas will provide the student with the structure to explore, reflect, communicate, and develop new questions about their experiences.

Classroom discussion is stimulating; however, a common movement experience which all could engage in together, and then discuss, would be even more beneficial.

Without a gym and fields, what do I have to work with? Well, everyone has a body and everyone is capable of moving. Certainly we experience a great deal of movement activity in the course of a day, with or without gyms and fields.

And the way that we percieve these movements determines how meaningful they are to us. The answer is so obvious that I have previously overlooked it. I will have the students focus on their bodily awareness of their experiences as they move. Although the awareness aspect of movement activity is often mentioned in the Physical Education literature, the practical, personal applications of this knowledge is rarely stressed in our physical education classes. I will begin to develop this awareness by having the students look at their ordinary bodily experiences throughout a day. When I am in a tense situation, how does my body react? Do I relate this uncomfortableness to my body by tensing up my shoulders? No wonder my neck aches! If I could only learn to deal with this anxiety immediately, instead of waiting for my weekly workout to release it. This sort of awareness is a direct form of knowledge for the individual. You experience, you know, you can be told this or read about it, but when you experience it directly in your body, the meaning is then your personal knowledge.

Who says we can only release tension in the gym? As Physical Educators, we should be concerned with the Catharsis aspect of movement. As Jewett states; "Man moves to release tension and frustrations precipitated by the pressures of modern living". 3 Why can't we teach students to recognize tension when it

occurs and deal with it at the time instead of channeling it into our body? In terms of life long benefits, it appears that there is a need for Physical Educators to be concerned with bodily awareness of tension. Let me explain: People in general have become alienated from their bodies. We regard the body as an object, an animated machine to transport us. We have encouraged this conception in p. e. by whipping the body into shape and constantly using it as a tool to achieve some extrinsic end such as winning the big game.

We are out of touch with our direct body experience. This is evident when you consider how externally motivated we are.

It appears that when we aren't feeling healthy our first question is "What do I take"? We have pills to go to sleep, pills to stay awake, pills for diets, pills for tension and pills to relieve depression. Did you have your Geritol today? Seldom do people attmept to uncover the cause of these problems and assume the responsibility for actively working through the problem, be it tension, anxiety, fatique, or being overweight.

Another example of the current neglect of body awareness is reflected in our slavery to the clock. We check the time to discover if we are hungry or sleepy, according to the appropriate hour of the day. Did you have your mid-

morning coffee yet? Rarely, do we pause to listen to our own natural body rhythms.

This widespread lack of awareness of the body contributes to a multitude of postural and lower back problems that plague millions of middle-aged Americans. Are you aware of how you are sitting as you listen to me? Is your spine slouching? Are your shoulders rounded? Do you know what your posture is doing to your body? By awareness, I mean a clear consciousness of what you are doing at this moment. Of course, one should not become preoccupied with body awareness, to the exclusion of all else. Rather, we should attend to the body in order to recognize the signals it is constantly sending. So if you are aware of your slouch, now, you can make an immediate correction and you will probably avoid the back-ache syndrome.

In addition, by becoming aware of our bodies, we can learn to conserve our vital energy and not over-expend it. Conservation of bodily energy will reduce the feeling of exhaustion we experience at the end of the day. For example, how much energy do we have to exert on a pen in order to write? How much energy do we waste applying an abundance of pressure? The only way we can begin to correct this waste of energy is develop an awareness of what we are doing. The implications to movement activities and sport skills are significant. But we learn

this by becoming aware of what we are experiencing directly instead of being told how inefficient we are in our movements.

Body awareness may be compared to a life-time skill technique that will enable the individual to deal with the daily tensions and stresses we ordinarily channel into the body. Students will always carry their bodies with them so the process of acquiring bodily knowledge through awareness, is continuous. It is unlike the sport skills which are usually limited to specific periods during one's life, where time and facilities are available. This awareness is something one can focus upon at will. And of course, we need no elaborate apparatus, gyms, specific environments or even much space to develop bodily awareness.

After the students develop basic awareness of their bodies, I will provide them with various movement activities in which to explore this awareness. Discussion and dialogue will accompany all of the courses. A sample of elective courses would be: 1) Basic conditioning in which the student would attempt to become fully-functioning in the conditioning program and not just view oneself as a body. They would discuss their feelings and experiences with each other as they get in condition. The student would learn to take a record of his or her heart rate and body temperature and plot their own bio-rhythms while developing an awareness of their physiological bodily messages. 2) Basic Hatha Yoga would

be offered to provide the student with a total exercise form. 3) A course would be established that focuses upon relaxation and releasing of bodily tension techniques. 4) Another course would center on the Joy of Movement for which jogging could be used. 5) I would also provide the student with a course in which they could develop their own movement forms to meet their particular needs. This list is not all-inclusive but it provides you with some possibilities.

Having presented a justification for a program focusing the students on their own bodily awareness, let me explain how we can develop this awareness. The underlying basis for much of the work in body awareness in in Hatha Yoga. Your preconceptions of Hatha Yoga may include images of short, undernourished men engaged in incredible body contortions, or you may have heard that yoga is associated with vegetarianism. So let me briefly explain what yoga is and how it can serve as a solid foundation for anyone interested in body awareness.

Yoga basically means "to yoke" or join in union both the mind and body. It is not a religion and Hatha Yoga is only one of seven types of yoga. It is concerned with total union of the mind and body through various physical exercises. Hatha yoga provides us with some of the techniques to develop this awareness of our body as we move.

One of the first lessons I learned in hatha yoga was that in doing any exercise, we should attempt to bring previously unnoticed awareness to the exercise. This is a major difference from our traditional Western exercise form, which de-emphasizes the process. In doing push-ups for example, we count them off so that we know at each instant how many more we have to do before we are finished. And, joy comes when we are done! Often, we think of all kinds of things instead of the particular movement involved in the exercise. But in yoga, we focus our total attention on each and every moment. For example, in toe touching we coordinate the mind, body and breath. The breath is used here because it aids the mover in focusing on the present movement; the breath can also be used to direct the movement by inhaling with exertion, then exhaling and letting go. The breath is a vital quality of the moving being and it contributes to moving as total being.

One begins the toe touching by changing the temporal aspect and slowing down the exercise so that one can concentrate on the total body stretch and not merely count off the number of stretches left to do.

The stretch is not limited to the legs, for a person can carry that feeling of stretch up into the lower back where so much tension is held; he can stretch

the spinal column out as he extends forward; he cna even carry or direct this stretch all the way up into the neck area. As the individual slowly stretches, one will reach that point where there is a slight pain; he can then work the breath with the stretch and consciously think of letting go of the tightness each time one exhales. Not only will this ease any discomfort, but it will also enable the person to stretch past that painful point and be conscious of the physical release.

Another technique to encourage body awareness is that of slowing down our movement, so that we can focus on each movement as we perform it. For example, by slowing down our walking and focusing upon it, we begin to perceive it from a different perspective. Why does my left foot point out when I walk? No wonder my shoes wear out on one side. What can I do to correct this?

By altering a student's perception, we can also stimulate the student to develop his or her awareness. We can do this by closing off certain senses, for example, asking students to walk around the room blindfolded. This will require them to rely on their other senses. They can also perform specific exercises while blindfolded, forcing them to concentrate on their own movements and not worry about everyone else.

I also believe that in increasing your awareness, you must develop the

feeling of being centered and then you must move and experience from this center. A centered position is a balanced, stable position. The person moves, directs his energy, gives and flows with the experience from this place. By exploring his inner space, he may locate this center.

This centered position can be developed by having the student balance himself off on the right and left, top and bottom, and front and back. He can also become aware of that centered position by stretching various muscles and then contracting them and observing where the center return is. For example, pull your eyebrows in toward your nose, now release them, feel where they return. Now stretch your eyebrows out to the side and notice where they return. That spot is a center position for the eyebrows. There is a center position in our body, but as we tense and contort our bodies all through the day, by night we become uptight and often lop-sided. We lose that essential inner balance.

In summary, the essence of the program is centered on the belief that people are the sum of their parts and they exist as total, whole functioning beings. I feel that I can work with the student as a total functioning being by incorporating the theoretical aspects of physical education with the individual's experience, as well as emphasizing body awareness.

Specifically, there are four areas that I would concentrate on in my year long program.

1) The experience of self in movement

2) The experience of self in relation to others

3) Learning about others in movement

4) Understanding movement itself

It is my objective that such an approach will "turn on" students to their own unique body of knowledge and provide them with a deeper understanding of themselves as moving beings.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Fraleigh, Warren, "An Instructional Experiemnt in Actualizing the Meaning of Man as A Moving Being", JOPHER, 40, (January 1969), p. 54.

2. Ibid. p. 57

3. Jewett, Ann, "Physical Education Objectives Out of Curricular Chaos", Curriculum Improvement in Secondary School Physical Education, Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania, November, 1971, p. 42.